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19 April 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR: Office Directors and NIOs

FROM : Associate Director-Substantive Support, NFAC

SUBJECT : Presidential Briefings

1. This memorandum updates my 17 November 1977 description of how we prepare for the DCI's Presidential Briefings based on experience in the five months intervening. The major change is lengthening the briefings. Experience has shown that we should strive to develop 20-30 minute long briefings.

2. The rotating scheme of topic submissions will continue. For this purpose NIOs and Office Directors remain grouped as follows:

Group I		Group II		Group III		Group IV	
NIO	CF	NIO	SP	NIO	PE	NIO	NP
	SS		USSR		WE		NESA
	AF		EAP		CH		LA
DIR	OER	DIR	OGCR	DIR	OSR	DIR	ORPA
	OSI		OWI		OIA		OCR

3. Group I nominations are requested to be submitted to the Presidential Briefing Coordinator (PBC) by COB Tuesday, 2 May. Other Groups' nominations will be requested in order on succeeding Tuesdays.

4. In addition to a descriptive title of the proposed topic, a short note on timing considerations for the briefing should be included with each nomination. For example, a timing consideration might be to brief the President prior to the visit of a certain head of state.

5. Topics for Presidential Briefings should be intelligence issues of current interest, rather than current intelligence items per se. They should be subjects on which you feel the Director should spend 20 to 30 minutes in his weekly briefing of the President. Therefore, they should not be items which can be adequately addressed in the PDB. Topics submitted normally should be suitable for briefing of the President about a month after submission.

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6. Topics selected for development into Presidential Briefings will be announced by memorandum each week. A one- or two-page outline of the major points to be addressed in the briefing should be submitted to the PBC within a week of selection. This outline will be submitted to the DCI and the D/NFAC for comments and approval.

7. Attached are some desiderata for weekly Presidential briefing topics.

8. Since November the character of the weekly DCI/NIO meetings also has evolved. In the future I see these meetings functioning in one of three ways.

--As a step in the preparation of a Presidential Briefing. By one week before the scheduled briefing a topic will have been developed more or less fully. At this point a DCI/NIO meeting often will be useful, not to rehearse the briefing, but to explore side issues and the general setting of the briefing topic.

--As a means for developing a briefing topic nomination. In some cases a general area will be thought to be of possible interest, but no individual can develop a satisfactory focus for a briefing topic. Then a DCI/NIO meeting may be used to "brain storm" the subject area.

--Outside of the Presidential Briefing preparation process, DCI/NIO meetings may be used to explore areas of substantive concern that arise for any reason. Any Office Director or NIO who wishes to use a DCI/NIO meeting in this way should inform the PBC.

The PBC is responsible for scheduling and preparing for DCI/NIO meetings. The PBC will inform NIOs, Office Directors and other interested people of the time, place and subject of the meetings about one week in advance.

STATINTL

Richard Lehman

Attachment

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Desiderata For Weekly Presidential Briefing Topics

The subjects which will receive extensive preparation are of two kinds, substantive intelligence subjects and intelligence craft subjects. The following criteria apply to the selection of subjects:

A. Criteria for all topics

1. Timeliness. Subjects should not be ephemeral current intelligence items. But they should be timely at the time of the briefing.

2. Format. Subjects should be conducive to a 20 to 30 minute oral presentation supported by about half a dozen 8"x10" graphics.

3. Efficiency. Subjects should be ones on which we are already working for other reasons.

B. Criteria for substantive intelligence topics

1. Purpose. Substantive intelligence topics should:

   a. favor areas in which the President will have to make decisions,

   b. strive to provide the President tools to question the assumptions underlying existing policies and proposals for policy change and/or,

   c. provide the President useful simplified mental models of the world, frameworks to help him focus effectively amidst the storm of bits and pieces of information he receives each day.

2. Form. Sometimes the presentation of a substantive topic in half an hour will not permit a thorough balanced discussion. In such cases substantive topics can be covered by two mutually supporting pieces. The first is a ten-to-twenty page paper which will be a thorough balanced treatment of the subject matter. The second is the topic of the discussion itself which will not try to be balanced or thorough. Rather it focuses on the aspect of the subject which can best be illustrated by an oral face to face exchange. The briefing itself emphasizes one of the following:

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a. Discussion of those aspects of the subject which are not known pointing out the current range of uncertainty, the degree to which further intelligence efforts can reduce this range, and whether such efforts appear to be worthwhile.

b. Discussion of those aspects of the subject about which there are significant differences of opinion pointing out who believes what, and presenting a measured discussion of the pros and cons of each.

c. Discussion of those aspects of the subject area which are uniquely associated with the DCI's responsibility, e.g. intelligence activities of a country in the context of its overall foreign policy.

d. Discussion of examples of the overall model described in the accompanying paper when presentation of an overview is the primary purpose of the briefing.

When an Office Director or NIO recommends a subject he should indicate whether it should be presented as a written paper plus a briefing or simply as a briefing.

3. Intelligence Nature. The substantive subjects selected should have a heavy intelligence flavor to avoid the appearance of unwittingly straying into the policy arena.

C. Criteria for selecting intelligence craft subjects

1. Purpose. Discussions of the intelligence craft in this arena should:

a. favor discussions of intelligence capabilities in areas in which the President will have to make policy decisions.

b. strictly forgo areas in which the President will have to make programmatic or other decisions in which the DCI has a bureaucratic interest. In order to preserve the sanctity of the briefing as the high point of objectivity in an otherwise partisan week, subjects like these should be addressed in separate sessions.

c. favor areas where the integrated capability of collection and production can be clearly shown.

2. Form. Presentations of subjects in the intelligence craft generally will not include delivery of a paper. When appropriate, they can include displays of hardware used or obtained, audio visual displays, etc.

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D. Other Briefing Topics

1. Nuggets. Sometimes an informational item will appear which should be presented to the President during the briefing because it is of special significance and would be enhanced by a face to face or special media presentation. Office Directors and NIOs knowing of such items should nominate them.

2. Fillers. In addition offices will periodically be asked to prepare short 5-10 minute briefings on topics which are more or less timeless. These will be kept on file and used as "fillers" on occasions when the major topic of the briefing does not require 30 minutes.

3. Short Fuse Briefings. Although every effort is being made to anticipate events so that briefings can be prepared in an orderly way, circumstances will sometimes require the preparation of major briefings on substantive intelligence topics quickly. Apart from the need to respond quickly when we must (and we have done well on such occasions in the last five months), our major effort here should be to minimize the need for crash programs by anticipating needs based on NIOs' and Officer Directors' knowledge of developments in their own areas of expertise. Experience has shown that overall it is less disruptive to prepare three briefings in an orderly fashion even if only one of them is used than to prepare one briefing on an SSN* basis.

*SSN: Saturdays, Sundays, and Nights

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